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VALLEY CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

FROM:

Susan Sholidan

DATE:

2/12/94

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Secretary Robertson

VOICE #:

LOCATION: Boston

FAX 617 727-5570

Home phone: 1-413-549-1606

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February 12, 1994
68 Maplewood Drive
Amherst, MA 01002
413-549-1606

Dr. Piedad F. Robertson,
Secretary of Education
Executive Office of Education
One Ashburton Place
Room 1401
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Piedad:

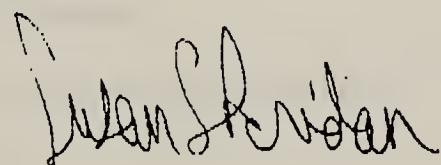
Today, Saturday, using Express Delivery 2-day mail, I sent three copies, as requested, of our charter school proposal to your attention at your office.

To make sure that we make the February 15th deadline, it seems prudent to FAX you a fourth copy today. I am doing so at this time, noon, on Saturday, February 12th.

Thank you for your attention to this proposal. Our founding group has spent a tremendous amount of time on Part I. We know that if Part I, including the Mission Statement, is carefully thought out, and if it reflects all of our combined view-points, we will have a school that will not founder over time because of an ill-defined or confused vision.

Our vision is a complex one, but it is exceedingly clear.

Sincerely,



Susan Rich Sheridan, Ed.D.

February 11, 1994
68 Maplewood Drive
Amherst, MA 01002

Dr. Piedad Robertson,
Secretary of Education
ATTN: Charter Schools
Executive Office of Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Secretary Roberston:

Enclosed please find Part I of our proposal.

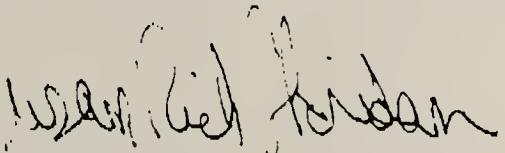
A tremendous amount of work has gone into this stage of the operation.

We would like to be given a clear mandate for a charter school to open in the fall of 1995. We have done a good deal of the preliminary work, as outlined in Parts II and III of the charter school application process. However, to do this kind of work in earnest, it is critical for us to receive a clear approval and go-ahead for the work that lies before us.

We therefore look forward with great anticipation to March 15th, when we hope to be given a clear mandate for a charter school. We will immediately begin our agenda of work, as outlined in the section Timetable at the end of Part I. It is truly impossible to do so with confidence and authority until we receive your support in the form of a clear go-ahead.

Thank you for your consideration of this charter school proposal.

Sincerely,


Susan Rich Sheridan, Ed.D.

Working Name of Organization: The Valley Charter Middle School

Contact Person: Susan Sheridan, Ed.D.

Signature: *Susan Rich Sheridan*

Title: Founder, Filing Person

Address: 68 Maplewood Drive

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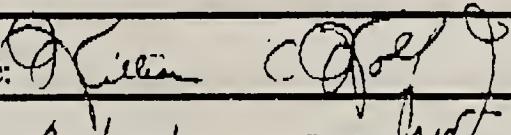
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

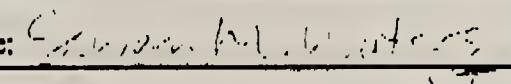
Executive Office of Education

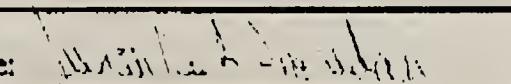
Charter School Application

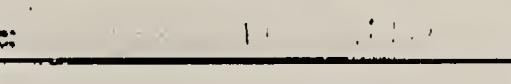
I/We, the undersigned charter school applicant(s), do hereby certify that the information provided herein and filed with the Executive Office of Education on this the 11th day of February (month) of the year 1994, is to the best of my/our knowledge, truthful and accurate.

(This signature sheet must be attached to the application when it is filed.)

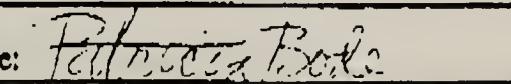
Name: William C. Wolf Jr. Signature:  Date: 2/17/94
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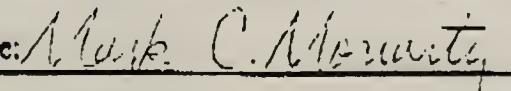
Name: Matthew Myhren Signature:  Date: 2/11/94
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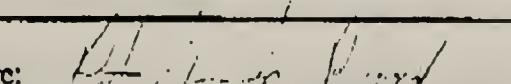
Name: Mark C. Mancuso Signature:  Date: 2/11/94
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If more space is required, please attach additional sheets.

Executive Office of Education, One Ashburton Place, Room 1401, Boston, MA 02108

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Education

Charter School Application

I/We, the undersigned charter school applicant(s), do hereby certify that the information provided herein and filed with the Executive Office of Education on this the 12th day of February (month) of the year 1994, is to the best of my/our knowledge, truthful and accurate.

(This signature sheet must be attached to the application when it is filed.)

Name: <u>Kathy L. ...</u>	Signature: <u>Kathy L. ...</u>	Date: <u>2/11/94</u>
Address: <u>54 Almond St.</u>	City: <u>Florence</u>	State: <u>MA</u>
		Zip: <u>01062</u>
		Tel: <u>543-6724</u>
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		Zip: <u>01062</u>
		Tel: <u>543-4245</u>
Name: <u>Rebecca L. Hess</u>	Signature: <u>Rebecca L. Hess</u>	Date: <u>2/11/94</u>
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		Zip: <u>01062</u>
		Tel: <u>543-4245</u>
Name: <u>Deborah M. ...</u>	Signature: <u>Deborah M. ...</u>	Date: <u>2/11/94</u>
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		Zip: <u>01002</u>
		Tel: <u>549-8772</u>
Name: <u>Deborah M. ...</u>	Signature: <u>Deborah M. ...</u>	Date: <u>2/11/94</u>
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		Zip: <u>01002</u>
		Tel: <u>549-8772</u>
Name: <u>Laurie Brunelle</u>	Signature: <u>Laurie Brunelle</u>	Date: <u>2/13/94</u>
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		Tel: <u>665-1164</u>

If more space is required, please attach additional sheets.

Executive Office of Education, One Ashburton Place, Room 1401, Boston, MA, 02108

The Valley Charter Middle School

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Appended: Two models which "fed into" this proposal:

- a. "The Thinking Child: Education and Economics: Prevention and Remediation."
- b. "Wellness Work."

CHARTER APPLICATION: PART I

1.) Mission Statement:

The mission of the Valley Charter Middle School is to provide a comprehensive approach to middle school education. One aspect of the mission is innovative educational strategies especially relevant to young adolescent students, involving a highly individualized, non-linear approach. Another aspect is preventative and interventive health care education and services designed for young adolescent students and their families.

It is important to address students' mental and physical health care needs, as well as their academic needs. It is important to do so at increasingly younger ages. Many of these adolescent needs involve the students' families. To insure the success of the students, families will be asked, in a contractual way, to participate in the school's integrated approach.

This kind of mission statement requires a complex operation. The Valley Charter Middle School will be a school *and* a community-based social service organization.

As part of its social service organization, this charter school will include a health care clinic and a research lab geared to research in both education and health. The school has three major educational goals. On-going field research will be conducted in these three areas:

- 1) innovative academic/cognitive and social programs designed for the middle school level.
- 2) innovative adolescent and family mental and physical health care education.
- 3) innovative financial strategies to support such a program, including research into the cost-effectiveness of these innovative educational and health care approaches in connection with reduced health care and social service costs, over five-year periods, corresponding to the granting cycles for charter schools.

The school and the clinic share five additional areas of research. Health care education and behavior and academic behavior are related. The five areas for health care research are:

- 1) **sexuality and reproductive health care issues** - including nutrition and substance abuse issues as these issues affect reproductive health.
- 2) **nutrition** - including issues having to do with substance abuse.
- 3) **physical fitness** - including issues having to do with substance abuse.
- 4) **parenting and "family" skills** - including issues having to do with nutrition and substance abuse.
- 5) **mental fitness**, including self-esteem, and issues having to do with substance abuse.

Family patterns are changing. Socio-economic patterns are changing. Some of the changes are related. To be successful in long-term, life-time ways, contemporary American public schools may need to include comprehensive social service operations like those incorporated in the Valley Charter Middle School.

It is part of the mission of this charter school to demonstrate, through on-going research and development, that this kind of comprehensive education not only "works," but that it is **cost-effective**. The Valley Charter Middle School aims to produce the kinds of students and families which will be less costly to support in connection with medical costs and with social service costs. Part of our mission is to try to break the cycle of welfare for this generation. Our overall mission is healthier, more effective, more productive student's family units. Our most important mission is helping students achieve a quality of life that is worthwhile to *them*.

These students and their family members will receive the kind of training in health care services which will allow them to move into this particular fast-growing field.

2) School Objectives:

A. The broad academic objectives for student learning are a **relevant education**. **Students need skills and attitudes and information useful to them.** Students need to be what children, as learners, naturally are; curious, eager, hopeful, involved. In addition, given the technological times, students need to know where to go for information; they need to know how to get it and how to evaluate it and how to present it and how to use it; they need, above all, to be self-directed in their learning, and, given the changing demands of the job market and of life in general, they need to be broadly proficient in a range of content areas and skills.

To provide training in these skills, the school will work with the traditional academic subjects in an integrated, projects-based way. These traditional subjects include math, science, language arts, history, social studies. The core skills of reading, writing and computing will be developed in the context of each of these academic areas. These content areas and skills will be presented in such a way that, in a sense, children can re-invent the wheel. Children will be allowed to work with powerful ideas *first*, doing discovery work as if they were "real scientists," for instance, learning the nuts and bolts procedures, *second*. Expectations for achievement can be high because the learning levels, in such an environment, will be high.

A range of lifelong learning and living skills, including technological skills, mediation skills, leadership skills, group skills are emphasized in this comprehensive approach where the focus is ever on relevance.

In line with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences described in the book Frames of Mind and operationalized in Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice, the "academic" objectives of the school can be seen in a more general light, beyond specific content areas. Rather than developing math skills, the aim is to develop what Gardner calls a logical-mathematical *intelligence*. In a similar fashion, the school aims at developing other intelligences in students and faculty members alike, including linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic (including health care or wellness) intelligence, and intra-and inter-personal intelligence. In connection with this intra- and inter-personal intelligence, our school has coined a word - "inter-acculturation." We define this as the ability of one mind shaped by a culture to work with another mind shaped by a different culture without being absorbed or annihilated or demeaned or threatened by - without absorbing or threatening or demeaning that other culture. We intend the word "culture" to include a range of definitions.

In addition, our school adds "technological intelligence" to this mix. Technological intelligence - the ability to work with computers and telecommunication - is going to be a skill of over-arching importance to any kind of capability in almost any other field.

Students and faculty in this school will be able to read, write, speak, debate, compute, draw (paint, sculpt - and so forth), construct, move, act, dance, make music, work with information, work with each other, design and conduct and evaluate research, care for their minds and bodies, and for their school, their families, and their communities in ways that will work outside of school as well as in school.

B. The non-academic goals of the school are the mental and physical health, and the socio-economic viability of the students and their families. This goal is directly connected to fostering self-esteem, which, in turn, creates socially and economically responsible behavior. These goals have to do with breaking the welfare cycle for this generation - a cycle which limits the options of some of our students and their families. By assuming responsibility for learning, students and their families take on responsibility for their lives. Teachers become guides. Students do the single most important thing they can do for their success; they take control of the process of their own education.

Thus, self-value, the taking of control, responsible action in school and community are three of the non-academic goals of this charter school.

C. We hope to foster a close, supportive, validating, problem-solving school community where the traditional boundaries between students, faculty, staff, family and community are blurred. The feelings of connection and of mutual responsibility between each member of this school will drive the success of the enterprise. Awareness, respect, and education about differences, including cultural, socio-economic, religious, age, abilities, sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity are crucial to the success of our school/community environment.

3.) Statement of Need:

A. Field research conducted by this group over the past three years suggests that, in both the public and private sector in this geographical area, there are parents and students who are looking for other kinds of approaches to middle school education. Parents want something they describe as "enhancement" or "enrichment" or "alternative approaches." Students want to be "more actively involved in learning." Some of these student have lots of questions. Some of them argue in school. Some "march to a different drum." Some have "alternative learning styles." Some are "bored." Some are "acting out." Some are truant. Some are "underachievers." Some are "learning disabled." Some are "attention deficit."

The most interesting, least dramatic, and yet, in a sense, most worrisome population is the one which causes no trouble in school, but which does no work outside the classroom. These students are the ones who, even in 3rd grade, can not seem to meet homework demands. They are described at the junior and high school level as students who are "bright enough, cooperative enough," but who show a certain passivity. When they leave the classroom, they disengage entirely from school work. Although they are not disruptive, they seem to "drift." They show up for class. They are not truant. But teachers feel, to their frustration, that they "lose" these students. This is one segment of the student population whom teachers feel they are

not serving as well as they might.

The consensus among local educators is that fifth grade is an opportune time to intervene in connection with disengaged students. There is evidence that some of these students come from economically disadvantaged homes. Even in the 3rd grade, it is clear that parental support, in some cases, for *whatever* reason, is not there in connection with homework. Some parents seem to "sign off" - or fail to sign on - when their children near the third grade in school.

It is further observed by local teachers that many of these apparently disengaged students have some compelling interest - to which they devote considerable time and energy - which simply does not happen to be academic. These interests are key to our approach. They are the "hook" that will allow students to move smoothly into the kind of self-directed, projects-based education that we feel is especially well-suited to early adolescent learning styles.

The local school system has tried to meet the needs of this middle school population by setting up teams in the 7th grade. The feeling is that this kind of teaming needs to be done "earlier," and continued "longer." Special Education provides other levels of support, but special education is not, in itself, an entire alternative system. Furthermore, it is "a big jump" from the junior and senior high schools to the South Amherst Campus, which is a kind of clinical educational setting for students who are unable to function socially in school, and who are, thus, beyond the special education resources offered in the schools.

Teaming is the way our school works with students, in cross-age, shared-interest groups. Our teaming starts in the 5th grade. Beyond that, *every* aspect of our school's charter education is "special." The whole educational system has been designed to meet adolescent needs and concerns in individualized ways, as if every need and concern were importance.

Local research with parents, students, teachers, administrators, educational collaborative directors suggests that there are a number of middle school age students in the Valley who are not special education candidates, who are not students who meet the fairly severe special education "prototype" level to go to the South Amherst campus, who would, however, benefit by an alternative middle school designed to meet adolescent needs - cognitive needs, mental and physical health care needs, family needs. There is consensus that these often pleasant, tractable but academically unproductive students are at risk for actual or potential alcohol and drug abuse, as well as for risk-related sexual experimentation.

Students who start to fail academically as early as the 5th grade lose self-esteem. Once students lose self-esteem, their entire lives may be adversely affected, including job skills, life skills, the basic ability to learn and to care about learning.

In a sense, all young people are at risk in adolescence. A young person at this time is in radical transition in many ways - mentally, physically, socially.

There is a lack of innovative programs available to address these middle school issues. While there are many innovative programs for the elementary school child, this middle school age group is "short-changed." This age group is no longer heir to the innovations of elementary education. On the other hand, this age group may not be ready for high school education which, in many instances, is modeled on a college lecture-type approach. In some cases, a "special ed." classification and /or tracking designation may damage adolescent self esteem. In general, for junior high school-age children, there is a nearly pejorative approach. Adults comment - with a kind of

prudent humor - "Their hormones are raging" - as if the very fact of puberty disqualifies these students somehow for serious education. It is as if puberty were a lost era in students' lives. There are biological times of radical transition for human beings which provide occasions for learning and being in new ways. Early adolescence is one of them.

Where there are students who are failing to connect with their schools, there must be schools designed for connection. T.V. programs like Bill Moyers' "The Mind/Body Connection," as well as positions presented on public radio by the Surgeon General, Jocelyn Elders, make clear that if we continue to separate mind from body educationally (let alone medically), we do so at our peril. If students are cut off from knowing and caring about their minds and bodies, they will fail to be healthy at school, at home, and in the world. Schools which are too big, classes which are too big, learning which is dissociated, families which are isolated and isolating, community members who are strangers to each other can not be effective enterprises. We need to return to small, densely interconnected learning and living units.

B. A charter school can address early adolescent educational needs in more effective ways precisely because **charter schools have a mandate to be innovative**. Innovation and research go hand in hand. It is logical, given current educational and health care pressures, to devise an educational experiment with a school that is also a health care operation. It also makes sense for both the school and the clinic to be research and development enterprises, so that society may learn and benefit from the experiment.

If the Valley Charter School population truly reflects the population of the Valley, and if its innovative educational approaches are successful, then the knowledge gained will be useful to other schools in the area. Adolescents will not feel disaffected, they will not feel disassociated in this school because they will be in the "driver's seat." A sense of control is critical to self-esteem and to engagement. This is what self-directed, projects-based education, conducted in interdisciplinary student-faculty-staff teams is all about.

Our charter status enables us as teachers, health care providers and administrators to follow our collective vision, staying focussed on each child's welfare. This kind of focus has, tragically, been lost in a public system where numbers and bureaucracy eclipse student needs.

The Valley Charter School is a healthy, viable, enriched education that breathes and grows precisely because it is responsive to students, families and community. The Valley Charter Middle School is adaptive because it is deeply practical. Charter status allows this school to continue to evolve in response to students needs and community needs. The school will be characterized by change.

4.) School Demographics:

A. The school will be located in the Pioneer Valley, in Hampshire County, possibly in South Hadley, most probably in Amherst. No facility has been secured.

B. This area was chosen because it fits the student-profile of the Valley Charter School. The student population is diverse culturally and socio-economically, and it includes a number of disaffected adolescent students. The general student population is growing, and it is over-loading and/or over-challenging the existing school systems. Two more towns join the Amherst Regional School district, adding to the elementary school populations. The senior high school will soon include the ninth

grade, so that the junior high can be more like a "middle school" model, serving 7th and 8th graders. Amherst high school is contemplating a 20-something million dollar renovation and building project - which may not be supported - economically or politically - by town members. The Amherst Schools have suffered millions of dollars of budget cut-backs in the past five years, while attempting to remain engaged, responsive, forward-looking. While meeting many student needs well, the system can not meet certain student needs. We have defined some of these under-served students.

With University budget cuts over the past few years, the number of college students has dwindled, freeing up housing that was formerly used for students. Landlords advertise this affordable housing (often waiving the first month's rent), in Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee. Because of good schools, better services, affordable housing, and a safer environment, the Amherst schools are absorbing large numbers of international students, including Russian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Puerto Rican students. The schools are also absorbing large numbers of children whose families are economically disadvantaged. Often English is a second language for both students and their families. Unemployment and other hardships present additional problems. The English as a Second Language (ESL) children appear to do all right with early bi-lingual education, but later, when they seem ready to be mainstreamed, there are a number of students for whom mainstreaming does not work. In addition, because of appreciable cultural dislocation, the families remain isolated, increasingly cut off from their own children, who have learned to speak English. A family break-down occurs along with educational break-downs. Our school addresses issues having to do with disconnection in a variety of ways. We plan to do so academically, medically, familialy, culturally, socially, economically.

There are a range of Amherst-area students who are currently under-served. This charter school is in the process of discovering, describing, and targetting some of these under-served students, ages 10-15. It is doing so with the help and the advice of existing schools, of parents, of social service agencies, and of concerned young people themselves.

In conclusion, for a variety of reasons, there are a number of late elementary and early junior high students in the Valley who will benefit from a more comprehensive, more integrative approach to education.

C. The Valley Charter School plans to serve a student population ages 10-15 whose distinguishing characteristic is affable disengagement. These are students who come to school daily, attend their classes, are pleasant, but who produce nothing outside of the classroom. A second characteristic of this population is one or more areas of considerable, if non-academic, interest. A third characteristic for a certain percentage of the population will be family income at or below state-designated poverty levels. A fourth characteristic must be the willingness of the whole family of any student who choses the school, or for whom the school is chosen - including grandparents and common law and foster members - to participate fully, in a formal, contractual way, with the entire program of the school, including health care expectations and practices, family and parenting expectations, and, where appropriate, ESL classes, and inter-acculturation work. The school has to function as an integrative and integrated unit if its students are to succeed.

D. The school's initial enrollment in the fall of 1995 will be no less than 50 students and no more than 100 students. The school will not grow beyond 250

students.

E. The grade levels to be served are 5th -8th, or students whose are, in general, no less than 10 years old and no more than 15 years old. The school will strive for gender balance throughout, as well as for racial and cultural and socio-economic balances throughout, in connection with students, faculty, staff, trustees.

There will be between 10-20 students in any interest-based grouping or team. Groupings or teams will be mixed-aged and gender-balanced and team-taught.

5.) Recruiting and Marketing Plan:

A. We will have a staff person responsible for creating liasons between the local public schools and the charter school. This person will work on out-reach efforts throughout the community. The school will be publicized through Amherst Kid-TV, over the electronic superhighway called Internet (including options like "go chat" and a variety of "kid" routes and bulletins), through ads in local newspapers, by being where students congregate after school, by being where parents gather at town meetings and fairs, and at housing-based community centers or common rooms, through person-to-person visits to local schools where we will talk to superintendents, principals, and teachers, and, most especially, to students in open forums. It is imperative that we make the process of the school clear, tht we make the student characteristics clear, the family requirements clear, the mind/body goals clear.

B. Outreach to students and families has to be handled sensitively, and effectively. This school is not a "last ditch" option, nor will it be a "dumping ground." It is an alternative, enriched, supportive, comprehensive approach to the needs of early adolescent children and their families. We do not intend to specialize in the poor and disadvantaged. We intend to combine the poor and disadvantaged with the rich and advantaged with the middle class to stir up a rich broth of innovative learning activity, relevant to contemporary society. We are an educational, medical, and socio-economic experiment. It will take time to build up the kind of trust that will allow families to choose our school, and for existing schools to make referrals to us, and for individuals and companies and universities and colleges to invest time, money, services in us. We believe that this will happen, over time. We have done our homework in the field. We know what needs to be done.

6.) Admissions Policy:

A. The admissions methods and standards to select students involve:

1) the student being currently in grades 5th-8th, and/or aged 10 -15, in general.

2) the student is characterized in his or her current school setting as being affable but disengaged, non-productive in connection with school assignments. Teachers can spot these students unfailingly! We hesitate to be more specific, lest we shut out certain children or lest certain families self-select out. We are neither anxious to create a school specifically for students with special emotional or educational needs, nor are we anxious to create a school only for the gifted and talented. We are interested in a balanced population of students which reflects the population of our Valley society.

The interview with the student and the family will be a critical part of the method of the admissions policy. Bi-lingual interviewers will be necessary, competent in the languages outlined in demographics.

3) the student has a series, or several areas of demonstratable passionate, non-academic interests.

4) in a percentage (to be determined - up to 50%) of the cases, the student's family is at or below the state-designated poverty level.

5) agreement by the student and by the student's entire family, including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, common-law or foster members, to participate fully in the programs of the school.

B. These policies ensure that the students are early adolescent, that they are at risk because of a non-dramatic, but definable disengagement vis a vis their own educations. This disengagement may relate to a lack of family support, which may, in turn, relate to economic disadvantages and/or cultural displacement. Or, they may not.

Because these policies insist on the commitment of the students' families to the entire school program, these policies may insure, or, at least, "copper the bets" in favor of student success. For, even if a student "turns on" to innovative educational approaches, this success can be undermined - and destroyed - by a lack of support at home.

By looking for some demonstratable area of intense interest, the admissions group may be able to discover, among the applicants, the ones whose mind-set will most easily allow that student to latch onto self-directed learning.

C. Grounds for dismissal are self- and family- determined, as well as faculty- and staff-suggested. If a student, after a full year, finds that he or she can not sustain self- directed learning, nor develop the kind of caring attitude toward self and community necessary to learn and grow in this school, then he or she will withdraw from the school. In the same way, a family may find that it simply can not be part of the educational and health care process of the school, and thus must withdraw. It is fervently hoped that this will not happen. For we would read withdrawal as *our* failure, not as the student's or the family's failure.

7.) Profile of Founding Coalition:

A. Three years ago, the core people in this founding group started an educational think tank in Amherst called "The Thinking Child." We started it with an eye to designing a middle school. The think tank took its name from a philosophy of education proposed in the 1990 dissertation of S. Sheridan, Drawing/Writing: A Brain Research-Based Writing Program.

Some of the people in this core group were artists and art educators at the elementary and middle school level; some were regular teachers at the elementary level; some were former Montessori teachers; some were special education teachers, some were English high school teachers; some were private elementary school directors. The group included Patty Bode of Amherst, who was then an art teacher at Wildwood School; her husband, Mark Moriarity, English Teacher at Frontier High School in S. Deerfield; Elyssa Griffiths-Johnson, special education teacher at the Wildwood School; Rebecca and Michael Muir-Harmony, directors of the Full Circle School (pre-school, elementary, private) in Bernardston, MA; Deborah Moore Roy, artist, art educator at the Interlocken School in Stockbridge, MA; Susan Sheridan, artist, drawing/writing consultant, former art and English teacher at the Eaglebrook School. We were all parents, all teachers; we came from regular education, and from special education; we came from public and from private school backgrounds. Some of

us had bachelors degrees, some of us had Masters, some had doctorates.

The founding of the think tank was a result of ten years of pre-doctoral and doctoral and post-doc research by Sheridan into schools and methods recognized as innovative and/or excellent state-wide. Sheridan's research resulted in a middle school model which received number 2009 from the federal initiative called The America 2000 Plan. The model was titled: "A Community-Based Educational and Economic Middle School Model Designed to Impact Literacy and Poverty." The model was re-titled "Education and Economics: Prevention and Remediation." This research and this model inform the current charter school design.

The group decided at that time not to continue plans for a middle school. We knew that charter legislation had been passed in other states. We knew about Ray Budde's seminal work on charter schools - we had gone to meet with him at his home - and we felt that this charter school format would be our optimal vehicle. We did not want to start another private school. We wanted to do something about *public* education.

While waiting for the charter legislation to pass in Massachusetts, a second model, this time for a Wellness Center or Community-based Health Care Clinic, was developed by Sheridan, 1992-1993. It, too, was the result of a year or so of research, and it, too, informs the current charter design.

Once the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act passed, including provisions for 25 charter schools in the fall of 1995, the group re-banded, and it grew. The founding group now includes Rebeca Allessi and Richard Gifford (teachers, Wildwood Elementary School); Putnam Goodwin-Boyd (teacher, Wildwood Elementary, now on sabbatical, taking paternity leave); Cathy Goodwin-Boyd (parent and counselor at Northampton High School); Bill Wolf, Jr. (parent and former U. Mass. prof., Dept. of Educ., now educational consultant), Leslie Laurie (parent and director, The Family Planning Council of Western Massachusetts - who will head up the health care operation of the school), Gina Simm, (parent and former Montessori teacher, currently working with the Cushman Pre-School), Leslie Johnson (nurse), Susan Waters, (graduate of Hampshire College, currently at U. Mass., and prospective biology teacher.); Laurie Brunelle (BA in Art Ed. student, U. Mass, researcher); Matt Mynttinen (BA student, Sociology, U. Mass., advocate for homeless youth); Michael Koch, print-maker, Hampshire College grad; Joe Arak, parent and marketing consultant; Deborah Arak, parent and massage therapist; vitally interested Amherst junior and senior high school students Brian, Justin and Amber Clark, Nick Gold, Zoe Teegarden, Rachel MacIntosh.

At least nine of these people are Mass. State-certified teachers. We have plenty of parents. In addition, Putnam Goodwin-Boyd has published math articles in professional journals, as well as a book on Math. Patty Bode is currently publishing a book on art and multi-cultural education. Sheridan has published articles in professional journals on the connections between drawing and writing, and has a book on the same subject with a publisher. Bill Wolf, Jr. is widely published, and is highly knowledgeable about that phenomenon known as "change-agents."

B. The group came together through the agency of Susan Sheridan and Patty Bode, who share interests in art and in innovative teaching strategies. The group itself brings affiliations with U. Mass. School of Nursing, with the U. Mass. School of Education, with the Northampton-based Western Mass. Family Planning Council, with Wildwood Elementary School, with Frontier Regional High School, with

Northampton High School, with Amherst Junior High School, with Cushman Pre-School, with Vernon Elementary School in Vt., with Interlocken School in Vt., with the Governor's Advisory Group on Women's Issues.

C. Future founders or organizers will be approached through the exigencies of meeting Part II and Part III of the charter application. We will seek out the kinds of people we need to open and run the school in terms of buildings (rented, donated, designed and built), grounds, equipment, furnishings, supplies, know-how. We will do what we can through donated services and materials, through donations, through grants, and through what we define as investment.

It is not only logical but imperative that charter schools "break the mold" economically. Charter schools get some state monies (the per capita amount per student defined as the lesser amount - should the sending district and the receiving district differ), but, fundamentally, these schools must support themselves. We call this a "sauve qui peut" mentality; that is, a "save oneself if one can" approach. We are told, as prospective charter school founders, that we "can do anything but charge tuition." This particular charter school will explore entrepreneurial approaches, including barter, to support itself. A combination of service/credit options (where work is provided free in return for college and university-granted credit), will provide some temporary staffing and/or interning/teaching for free. In the same way, we will hope to barter goodwill and good p.r. for services from a range of partners who have no available cash, but who can provide advice, skills, accounting services, legal services, even a building for free. We will also attract actual money as an investment in what could be defined as the "product" of the school - a potentially extremely capable member of working team. We plan to "sell" the feasibility of this kind of investment to local wealthy individuals, to businesses, to teaching hospitals, to health care operations. To do so, we need to convince investors that it is cheaper to put the money into education "up front" than it is to pay later when education has failed. The "later" costs are fast becoming insupportable in terms of re-education, health care costs, welfare costs, other social service costs. We are simply going to have to sell the idea that a healthy, well-trained, productive, socially and economically viable population is worth it. This kind of education is not going to be cheap. But it is going to be a lot cheaper than continuing to under-educate and under-serve the needs of an appreciable number of students and families in our country. There is N.Y. company which has made getting clients off welfare pay. If they can do it, we can do it.

Specific plans for future recruitment of founders/trustees, or organizers, or other levels of support include names listed below. Some of these people have already been approached at a preliminary, dialogue level. Some have signed on. Some are still to be approached:

Joan Schuman, Director of HEC, the Hampshire Educational Collaborative, Northampton. - possible administrative partner once adequate funding is secured.

Mary Alice Wilson, Director, The Five Colleges Partnership, Amherst - no possible partnering.

Dr. David Smith, humanities professor, Hampshire College - advice.

Dr. Keith Williams, Assoc. Vice Chancellor for Univ. Relat., U. Mass. approached twice by letter. Needs follow-up.

Jamie Chernoff, Dir. Econ. Devel., U. Mass; to be approached.

Dr. Ernie Anderson, Educ., U. Mass. computers and telecommunications; dialogue begun.

Dr. Richard Clark, Dir. MSTEP program, Educ., U. Mass.; dialogue begun.

Dr. Johnstone Campbell and Dr. Charles Adams, Inquiry Program, Educ., U. Mass; to be contacted.

Michael Kuch, printer-maker/technician (for Leonard Baskin), Hampshire College grad, board member The Learning Tree, a Springfield, MA-based post-grad year booster program. Advice.

William Gillen, Amherst architect; has 10 acres of land to sell for 1/2mil. Has built schools.

Norton Juster, architect, writer, Renaissance person: Juster, Pope, Frazier Architectural Firm, Shelburne Falls: very interested. Advice.

Allen Torrey, Amherst, on board of retirement home Applewood; approached about possible partnership with the retirement complex, sharing its medical facility. Needs follow-up.

Nancy Kelly, Asst. to the President, Hampshire College- possible self-directed curriculum and portfolio assessment partnering

David Ziomek, director, the Hitchcock Center for Environmental Studies, Amherst- possible science component partnering. Building partnering?

Dr. Curtis Ellison, professor, School of Preventative Medicine and Epidemiology, Boston University School of Medicine- possible research & development partnering; dialogue well established. Advice.

Dr. Arthur Eve, Director, the Maurice Donohue Institute, U. Mass. , Amherst.- advice given and gratefully received.

Dr. Madelaine Marquez, asst. to the president, Mt. Holyoke College, connected with the Mt. Holyoke magnet school, member Board of Education.. Approached 2 years ago for advice, middle school. Needs follow-up.

Mr. Joseph Spaulding, director, The Wang Center, Boston- names, insurance, hospitals. Possible money sources. Advice provided last fall.

Christine King, School of Nursing, U. Mass, Amherst- to be approached about service/credit nursing options.

Terry Johnson, head, Amherst Teachers and Parents for Excellence. Approach

Dr. Carla Klauson-Hook, director, Health Program, Guerena School, Springfield- possible adolescent health care partnering. Dialogue opened.

Leslie Laurie, Director, Family Planning Council of Western Massachusetts, Northampton; will organize and oversee the charter school's health care operation. Partnership established.

Mark Segar, The Common School, grades pre-k-6, Amherst; approach for advice.

Jill Paul, CEO, Pioneer Valley Girl Scouts; possible partner, adolescent girls' health care research, especially at the middle school age level. W. Mass. has highest teen pregnancy rate statewide. Dialogue opened.

The Stone Center, Wellesley College, research, women's health care issues. Do research.

Carol Gilligan, gender research, Harvard. See if she wants to do research with our school.

Brightwood Elementary School, Springfield; possible school health care partnering

Dr. Maria Idali-Torres, U. Mass. Div. of Public Health, U. Mass. Amherst. Get advice, connection with Brightwood School.

The teaching hospitals: possible money sources.

U. Mass., Worcester

Mass. General, Boston- Bob Buchanan (Spaulding)

Boston University School of Medicine- done through Ellison

The health care insurance companies: possible money sources

Blue Cross Blue Shield- Bill Van Fassen (Spaulding)

Kaiser Permanente, Northampton.

Prudential

CHP's

Hospital CEO's at: possible money sources:

New England Medical- Jerry Grossman (Spaulding)

Cooley Dickinson

Bay State Medical

Greenfield Hospital.

Community Health Operations: possible money;

Harvard Community Health - either Neil or Paul Ferris -
(Spaulding)

Spaulding Rehab.- Dr. Manuel Lipson (Spaulding)

Insurance companies: possible money

John Hancock: David D'Elisandro (Spaulding)

Nursing Homes: possible money

MediPlex , Waltham, Abe Grossman (Spaulding)
and Medi Trust .

Peter Karoff, The Philanthropic Initiative- money? - get address from Marty Linsky

8.) Timetable:

A. Timetable of Events:

1) February '94; file proposal, get mandate for 5-year charter school
2) Spring, '94; continuing out-reach to build board of trustees with diverse skills and connections to assist in the planning of Part II and Part III of the charter application. File parts II and III. Get formal charter mandate for fall of 1995.

3) Spring and beyond, search for a site, temporary.
4) Spring '94 and on-going; serious logistical talks, at least monthly, with break downs into groups that meet weekly, involving the trustees and existing staff to iron out answers to the questions which have to do with selling the school to financial supporters, to families, to students, to the growing staff:

How is the school different? How will it do what it says it will? Process? Make up? Procedure in connection with the staff? the faculty? The clinic? The lab? How do the contractual family obligations work? How will the school integrate health care education and academics? That is, work out in detail the answers to every section in Part II and III of the charter application.

6) Continue school health care research in the field.
7) Spring '94 and beyond; build the staff, build the faculty, build the curricular resources, the ESL resources, the jobs skills resources, the jobs resources, the inter-acculturation resources.

8) market, advertise, recruit the student body.
9) Continue forum with local students to get their input on innovation. Use them, with their permission, to "get the word out."

10) Fall '94 and beyond, serious partnering, fund-raising.
11) Spring 1995, long-range design and construction plans for a 250-student middle school. Find the site, buy it, design the school, get the money to build it.

12) Summer 1995, get temporary school building, staff, teachers, students, families, resources, clinic, research lab, supplies ready to roll!

13) Fall, 1995 open the school.
14) Start the five-year research projects having to do with mental and physical adolescent health, family health, educational innovations, the relationships between health and learning, the cost-effectiveness of this mind/body, school/clinic operation. Set up data banks. Make these data banks available to doctoral researchers in the health care fields and in education.

B. Feasibility of opening doors this fall, 1994 = nil

THE THINKING CHILD. More like the World. A Holistic Model*

EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS
PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION

Holistic Design for an Urban Middle School Model of Education
to Impact Issues that Relate to Women and Poverty.

Susan Rich Sheridan, Ed.D.

21 Maplewood Drive
Amherst, Mass. 01002

February, 1992

* The theory and practice behind Sheridan's "The Thinking Child" has a 7-year history in brain research, in educational research, and in the teaching of a strategy called Drawing/Writing, k-12.

THE THINKING CHILD. More like the World. A Holistic Model***Holistic Design for an Urban Middle School Model of Education
to Impact Issues that Relate to Literacy, and to Women and Poverty.****A Design to restructure education in the context of community****Designed by Dr. Susan Rich Sheridan, of Massachusetts, with input from:**

Beatrice Blain, Principal, GIII Elementary School, GIII, Mass.

Dr. Paula Wilder, Principal, Greenfield Federal St. School, Mass.

Sarah Pirtle, author, Assoc. Prof. Univ. of Vt.

Ariene Guptill and Barbara Farren, retired teachers, Addison, Maine

Lee Guptill, former school board member, fisherman, Addison, Maine

Co-workers on the assembly line at the Worcester Wreath Factory, Addison, Maine.

Dr. Robert Binswanger, former principal, Boston Latin Academy, Visiting Prof., Dartmouth College.

Sue MacLeod, Math Teacher, Greenfield Community College, Mass.

Dorothy Milne, English Teacher, Counselor, Athletics teacher, Bement School, Deerfield, Mass.

Rebecca and Michael Muir-Harmony, founders, heads, and teachers, Full Circle School, Bernardston, Mass.

Ginny Kahn, founder, The Atrium School, Watertown, Mass.

Richard Zajchowski, director, The Touchstone School, Grafton, Mass.

Dr. Ray Budde, Education by Charter,

Polly Brown, teacher, Touchstone School, Grafton, Mass.

Nancy and Michael Tooker, Investment Brokers, Boston, Mass.

Ellen L'Esperance, entrepreneur, New York

Dr. Tony Burgess, Institute for Education, University of London

Dr. Anne Turvey, Professor, Institute for Education, Univ. of London

Dr. Richard Baker, Headmaster, Noble and Greenough, Dedham, Mass.

Raymond Nelson, Head, Hebron Academy, Hebron, Maine.

Leslie Gunther, Director, New Middle School, Hebron Acad., Hebron, Maine.

Desmond Pullen, Director, Middle School, Williston Northampton School, Mass.

The English Department, Eaglebrook School, Deerfield, Mass.

Patti Bode, Art Teacher, Wildwood Elementary School, Amherst

Dr. Mark Segar, Director, The Common School, Amherst, Mass.

Irene Wass, Asst. Business Manager, Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.

Dr. Ed Foley, Director, Middle School, Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.

Jill Crafts, Asst. Dir., English teacher, Middle School, Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.

Carolyn Peter, Head, Winsor School, Boston, Mass.

Ann Vershbow, Head of Middle School, Winsor School, Boston, Mass.

Gene Bishop, Bus. Manager, Winsor School, Boston, Mass.

Dan Blanchard, Director, Computer Services, Univ. of Mass., Amherst.

Dr. William Wolf, Jr., Education, Univ. of Mass., Amherst.

Dr. Michael Royer, Psychology, Univ. of Mass., Amherst.

Dr. Katherine Flit, Neurobiology, Univ. of Mass., Amherst

A. Victoria Mederos, State Director, Affirmative Action/Human Rights, Boston.

Dr. Lucy Williams, Mass. Law Reform Institute, Northeastern Univ., Boston, Mass.

Rosemary Alexander, Employment Services, Boston, Mass.

Juana Trujillo, State Employment Services, Boston, Mass.

Colleen Price, State Employment Services, Boston, Mass.

Joan Pearson, State Employment Services, Boston, Mass.

original "Save Women Save World" group,
formed fall of 1991.

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THE THINKING CHILD. More like the World. A Holistic Model* EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS

OBSERVATIONS:

At this time in the history of our country, there seems to be insufficient money to support effective public education. There also does not seem to be sufficient money to provide effective support for the poor. Overall, there is a crisis in literacy in connection with regular students, with special needs students, and with a range of young and older English as a Second Language learners.

The idea of what it means to be literate is changing. Process is emerging, over content. Rather than being well-read, a literate person is going to need to be able to "read" in a variety of ways, visual and verbal, including computer languages. It will no longer so much be "what you know" as "how you go about knowing what you know."

QUESTIONS:

Is it possible to construct a model that impacts both education and economics? What basic skills do kids really need to know to survive intelligently and effectively in society? Would the model target any special ages educationally? Would it target any one segment of the poor economically? Would it be rural, urban?

SECTION I:

EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC PLAN: Preventative and remedial.

1) Take an existing (forward-looking, if possible) middle school in an urban area (where, if possible, there is a core of concerned parents), with poor working or welfare mothers, some elderly, some other parents, some local industry and community service organizations (Rotary, Elks, Veterans of Foreign Wars), and forge a school-based community service center that impacts literacy issues, health issues, family issues, educational issues, economic issues, especially as they relate to girls and women.

2) Add a day care that is business-run; after school care; after school and in-school literacy programs, including ESL programs; volunteer programs, putting the elderly and retired, and any available parents to good use.

3) Design a curriculum that is a model for excellence. Taking the best of private middle school curricula and theory and the best of public middle school curricula and theory should bear fruit. One of the implications of the best in private education are small classes, and well-equipped class rooms and physical plant. Small classes, equipment and a well-maintained physical plant are expensive. Literacy skills in connection with critical thinking skills will be key. The assembly-line mind is largely a thing of the past. A more independent mind is going to be needed in a society where robots and computers do a good deal of the routine work. Social skills in human relations will also be key.

4) Recognizing that this kind of model for excellence is going to be expensive, Run the school on a multi-level work/study plan where everyone is giving time and work in place of money to run and maintain the school. A kind of barter system. For both students and their parents, there should be a sense of earning education, and thus of owning it. Teachers and a head of school, secretaries, nurses would be paid good salaries, and real money would be earned in certain instances in connection with the school, but the ethos of the school would be on invested helping.

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THE THINKING CHILD. More like the World. A Holistic Model*

4) Get very creative about money: Besides the multi-level work/study plan, work out enduring support for this kind of educational excellence through a combination of: local taxes, local industry, gifts from wealthy citizens (if there are any around), long-term gifts from big corporations and from foundations that have a vested interest in the kind of kids and women the school is turning out. There has to be some way to safeguard public education from being periodically devastated. There should be laws to protect and to support schools. The run-of-the-mill taxpayer can not support this kind of model for excellence. The private sector has got to put its weight behind general education. People who know and care about money need to figure this out. Or this model is just another nice idea.

If we are trying to forge a model that combines what works in private education with what works in public education, we may have to think about the public school as a non-profit organization which makes money. Are there ways for public schools to be community-owned and self-supporting in some ways? What can the school "produce and sell" to the community? The valuable commodity the school produces are responsible, effective citizens who will be self-supporting. To do this, the students need to learn the skills they will need to work in ways that will be useful to the marketplace, and the local marketplace has to receive them.

5) Forge a community effort that replaces or supplements the disintegrating (or self-redefining, single woman-run) family; get the moms educated and off welfare; get the kids working in and for the school; include skills and job training and job placement for the kids for after-school, holidays, summers. Develop a learning/earning mentality.

6) Include information-packed sex-ed. or human physiology courses, along with human skills courses, and thinking skills courses so that the kids emerge as informed, thoughtful, open-minded 9th graders WHO ARE LESS LIKELY TO BECOME PREGNANT TEENAGERS, AIDS VICTIMS OR CARRIERS, DROP-OUTS, DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSERS, MOTHERS ON WELFARE. An intellectually and socially POWERFUL GROUP OF ninth grade boys and girls should startle the local high school. Over time, the middle school should impact the local high school and the local elementary school.

6) Research and anticipate the services and skills needed in the year 2000. Expose kids, ESPECIALLY GIRLS, to early education that may lead them into pediatrics, ob-gyn., nutrition, research on aging, wellness research in connection with women and children, cancer and AIDS research, computer science and research, environmental research, spaceengineering and research, international law and international relations, community law, business, and relations. The key here is asking: What skills and jobs will society need or offer by the time these kids graduate from high school, or from college?

SUGGESTION :

IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO OFFER THE KIND OF TRAINING IN HIGH SCHOOL THAT PUMPS KIDS INTO THE JOB MARKET IF THE MARKET IS READY TO PROVIDE SOME SERIOUS, APPRENTICE TYPE ON THE JOB HIGHER TRAINING. OR, INDUSTRY SHOULD BE READY AND WILLING TO PUT CAPABLE KIDS THROUGH THE COLLEGE TRAINING THAT WILL MOVE THEM INTO THEIR OWN INDUSTRY. PRIVATE INDUSTRY HAS TO CARE MORE ABOUT ITS ACTUAL AND PROSPECTIVE WORKERS - INCLUDING, MOST ESPECIALLY, WOMEN.

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THE THINKING CHILD. More like the World. A Holistic Model*

SECTION II:

1). **Targetted Skills: Critical Thinking Skills** having to do with broad-based literacy, including how to search through and deal with vast amounts of information and data. Also, **LIFE SKILLS.**

The critical skills have to do with speaking, reading, writing, communicating. Computer skills will be critical. So will the human or life skills of interdependence, of cooperation, collaboration, conflict resolution, sensitivity to diversity, whether the differences are gender-based or culture-based. Practically speaking, children are going to have to learn to deal with other human beings, well.

They are also going to have to deal with mountains of data.

These thinking and cooperative skills are particularly appropriate to develop at the middle school level. These skills are "more like the world." They are the skills our children will need in the larger political and economic world, where they are going to have to get along and make a living.

MOTTO: THE MORE YOU LEARN, THE MORE YOU EARN. This motto does not have to be looked on as unduly acquisitive. The poor need to earn money. The motto is sensible, and can imply earning of more abstract rewards, too. However, in many ways, money is freedom.

2). **Targetted Student: The Middle School Student.**

The research behind this model suggests targetting the middle school age years - roughly from the 6th through the eighth grades - as the time to impact - in both long and in shorter term ways - a range of issues relating to education, as well as issues relating to poverty, most especially in connection with women and poverty, and thus, to children in general in connection with poverty.

Educational research suggests that the model would be child-centered. Thus, the phrase "The Thinking Child" is appropriate. The phrase carries with it an understanding of the considerable powers of the child to think, and, beneath that understanding, of society's responsibility to develop those powers.

This model suggests that it is in the most basic self-interest of American society to develop these thinking powers. Not doing so clearly carries considerable risks, and these risks impact our economics profoundly. An undereducated population is a dependent one. We have large numbers of increasingly dependent citizens.

The pre-, peri- and early post-adolescent female is a high risk student, intellectually, affectively, socially, economically. She is in transition. Developmentally, these young girls are "all over the map." So are the boys. Both males and females have vast amounts of energy. They want to be with each other. They are also hypersensitive to each other's opinions. They need to belong, to self-define, to emerge in the context of self and of the group.

The model is preventative because it attempts to take stock of where these young students are psycho-sexually. It recognizes the need to self-define and to belong. It channels the energy and it informs the energy. The kind of education that fully engages the mind and body of middle school age student, informing them and encouraging them, should impact teenage pregnancy, crime, high school and college drop-out rates, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse. This age student has a tremendous amount of energy, and is in transition sexually, cognitively, affectively, socially.

The model is remedial because it assumes that these students need to re-learn how to learn in ways that puts them in the driver's seat, and it assumes they are under-informed (or, in need of forming) in terms of critical thinking skills, in terms of relevant literacy, in terms of human interpersonal skills. .

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There appears to be an enlightened middle school movement in our country. There is good pedagogy out there, where the understanding is that the middle school age student is not a mini version of the high school student, but an entirely different kettle of fish. While it is true that a human being can be "made" or "broken" at the elementary school level, in terms of a belief in self as a capable human being, the making or breaking may be even more critical at the middle school level. It is surely true that a great deal can be done at this level.

There are many fine elementary schools, public and private. There is, in general, less sureness about how to handle the middle school age child effectively. For that reason, a new model that targets this level of education, may have further appeal, beyond the range of issues cited above.

3) Targetted Poor: Mothers.

The motto here might be, "Save the Women, Save the World."

Mothers, single or otherwise, perhaps, most especially, of middle school age children, are at a time

